



Washington, D.C. 20505

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OEXA 82-0284/E

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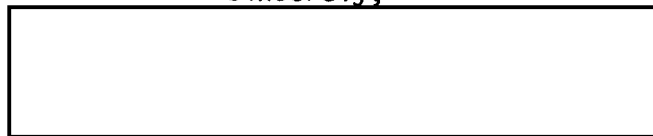
Mr. Robert Simmons, Staff Director
Select Committee on Intelligence
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Rob:

Enclosed herewith is the answer to a question of Senator Patrick Leahy's on the Miskito Indian casualties which arose during the 15 March 1982 SSCI hearing on El Salvador. I would appreciate your passing the enclosure to Senator Leahy via Ed Brynn or Tom Connolly who reminded us that a reply to the question had not yet been received.

I am also enclosing, for its possible interest to readers, a copy of the Agency assessment "Nicaragua: Repression of the Miskito Indians"; GI 82-10056, March 1982, Copy 458. This study, as you will note, is classified SECRET.

Sincerely,



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Chief, Legislative Liaison

Enclosures




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OEXA:  (20 April 82)



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SECRET

S E C R E T

Senate Select Committee Hearing on El Salvador, 15 March 1982 Query by Senator Leahy:

QUESTION: SENATOR LEAHY MAKES REFERENCE TO THE CLAIM THAT MANY NICARAGUAN INDIANS HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED OR ASSASSINATED. HE ASKS HOW MANY IS MANY?

RESPONSE: CIA does not have precise figures on the number of Miskito Indians who have been killed and imprisoned by Nicaraguan security forces during the period from December 1981 through February 1982. We have no direct access to the region--the Nicaraguan Government has forbidden Embassy travel in the northeastern area of the country--and there is a strict news censorship of the area in Nicaraguan press. We do have photography which vividly depicts villages that have been burned and destroyed by the Sandinistas, but these provide no data on human casualties. The vast majority of available information on atrocities against the Miskitos has been obtained from refugee debriefings, primarily those carried out by U.S. Embassy personnel in Honduras and by the Honduran Government. In its totality, the refugee information would place the number of Miskito deaths in excess of one thousand individuals. We believe that the refugee information is almost assuredly exaggerated, at least in part. CIA analysts estimate the Miskito deaths at the hands of FSLN security forces as approximately 200. We note that the draft resolution presented in early March 1982 to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva mentioned the death of "several hundreds" of Miskitos and the imprisonment of approximately 1,000. Some of our information emanates from non-refugee sources. For example, a Nicaraguan [redacted] 25X1 [redacted] reported that he had 25X1 personally overheard the communications between Nicaraguan Air Force pilots who were conducting strafing and rocket attacks against Miskito Indians who were attempting to flee by canoe into Honduras, using the Coco River. The pilots used descriptive language in reporting the results of their attacks, stating at the end that the "river was turning red with Miskito blood." Another source whose credibility is presumably good 25X1 [redacted] who provided information on FSLN atrocities against the Miskitos in late March 1982. The [redacted] said that he had talked with a 25X1 [redacted]

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survivor of a massacre at the settlement of "Asang," where 70 Miskitos were executed by Sandinist army troops for counterrevolutionary activities. The survivor said he had been allowed to escape because he personally knew one of the Nicaraguan NCO's who took part in the execution. The cleric also reported that stiff jail sentences had been handed down to two religious leaders in the Atlantic Basin region. One was sentenced to 20 years and the second to 27 years in prison. In both cases the two men were accused of undefined counterrevolutionary activity and communicating with the enemy.

Vast numbers of Miskitos were captured and detained by the Sandinist Army from December 1981 through February 1982. The majority were placed in detention camps until they could be forced-marched to resettlement camps south of the Atlantic border area.

The FSLN government has mounted a campaign to attempt to prove that their action of relocating the Miskitos was to improve their situation--to move them to more productive land. The evidence, however, that the FSLN has been guilty of gross violations of human rights vis-a-vis the Miskitos is overwhelming. We have attached a report by the DDI on the "Repression of the Miskito Indians." It contains photographic evidence of the destruction of two Indian villages. A total of 42 such villages have been identified as having been destroyed by the FSLN

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